

INVESTIGATING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TOP
MANAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF IN MALAYSIAN TECHNICAL
UNIVERSITY NETWORK (MTUN)

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A thesis submitted in the fulfillment of the
requirement for the award of the
Doctor of Philosophy in Science

Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2020

For my beloved mother and dearest younger brother Muhammad Umair



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful, all praises to ALLAH almighty, without His blessings it would not have been possible to achieve this goal. I would like to express my ultimate thanks to my Supervisor Associate Prof Dr Berhannudin Mohd Salleh, definitely without his obligation this one would have been challenging to complete this thesis. I was also fortunate to have a very supportive supervisor Dr. Zulida Binti Abdul Kadir, and co-supervisor Dr. Sazuliana Binti Sanif be grateful for their time, wisdom, and determination. Special gratitude is paid to Dr. Azme Khamis, and Dr Nor Hazana for generous help received in the statistical analysis. To my family, gracious for your persistent praise, strengthen, and love. Specifically, I would like to thank my greatest supportive pillar, my mother (Samina Saboohi) who have divulging belief in me, to Muhammad Umair, my exceptionally wise and generous younger brother and Wulan Hardini my sister-in-law, I am thankful for been here in my whole journey. I am so obliged for everything you have done to help me in this journey. I am truly grateful to have all of you.

I would also like to pay my gratitude to the Malaysian Technical University Network (MTUN) their academic staff and heads of departments available for this study and also my research fellows who participate with their opinions and openness, allow others to benefit and succeed in work. Last but not the least; I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the, Office for Research, Innovation, Commercialization, Consultancy Management (ORRIC) at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia for providing me with a generous scholarship without given many opportunities through attending training, conferences and research assistantships that allowed me to practice and enhance my research skills for my research work. At the end, I pray for the entire respected individual involved, directly or indirectly in my study. I finish the acknowledgement with the slogan of UTHM “With Wisdom We Explore”.

ABSTRACT

Organizations are there because of their employees and vice versa employees are there because of their organizations. Communication is a basic element which increases harmony among individuals and organizations for achieving goals at the workplace. Communication is a fundamental skill for organizational development, whereby a lack in communication efficiency leads to a dissonance atmosphere. The aim of this study is to explore the issue of organisational communication between heads of departments and academic staff of all four Malaysian Technical University Network (MTUN). Study focuses on identifying the relationship of communication flow among academic staff and heads of departments in MTUN vertical top down and horizontal layout. The researcher used a mixed method approach to collect the relevant data for this study questionnaire and interview, questionnaire for quantitative approach and interview for qualitative purpose. Quantitative analysis determines the level of communication satisfaction among heads of departments and academic staff. While, qualitative analysis works on communication satisfaction from the perspective of the heads of departments. The population of this study consisted of two groups, namely, heads of departments (n=113) and academic staff (n=3596) from all four MTUNs. Heads of departments were intentionally selected using purposeful sampling while academic staff were selected randomly. This research contributes to academic organization to quantify the internal organizational communication styles, communication satisfaction patterns and explains how leadership styles influence communication satisfaction. The findings revealed inefficient communication among heads of departments and academic staff due to moderate levels of communication in daily conversation at the workplace. This study insights of communication culture and how to foster an engaged heads of departments and staff with communicational behaviour. The research highlighted the areas of less satisfied communication areas as well as reasons for less satisfaction. Suggestions for improvements of communication skills among heads of

departments and academic staff are essential and crucial communication skills for leaders must be improved for long term organizational goals.



ABSTRAK

Organisasi ada kerana pekerja mereka dan sebaliknya pekerja ada kerana organisasi mereka. Komunikasi adalah elemen asas yang meningkatkan keharmonian antara individu dan organisasi untuk mencapai tujuan di tempat kerja. Komunikasi adalah kemahiran asas untuk pengembangan organisasi, di mana kekurangan kecekapan komunikasi menyebabkan suasana disonansi. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka isu komunikasi organisasi antara ketua jabatan dan staf akademik keempat-empat Rangkaian Universiti Teknikal Malaysia (MTUN). Kajian berfokus untuk mengenal pasti hubungan aliran komunikasi di kalangan staf akademik dan ketua jabatan dalam susun atur menegak dan mendatar MTUN. Pengkaji menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran untuk mengumpulkan data yang relevan untuk soal selidik dan temu bual kajian ini, soal selidik untuk pendekatan kuantitatif dan temu bual untuk tujuan kualitatif. Analisis kuantitatif menentukan tahap kepuasan komunikasi di kalangan ketua jabatan dan staf akademik. Sementara itu, analisis kualitatif berfungsi pada kepuasan komunikasi dari perspektif ketua jabatan. Populasi kajian ini terdiri daripada dua kumpulan, iaitu ketua jabatan ($n = 113$) dan staf akademik ($n = 3596$) dari keempat-empat MTUN. Ketua jabatan dipilih secara sengaja menggunakan persampelan bertujuan sementara staf akademik dipilih secara rawak. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada organisasi akademik untuk mengukur gaya komunikasi organisasi dalaman, corak kepuasan komunikasi dan menjelaskan bagaimana gaya kepemimpinan mempengaruhi kepuasan komunikasi. Hasil kajian menunjukkan komunikasi yang tidak cekap di kalangan ketua jabatan dan staf akademik kerana tahap komunikasi yang sederhana dalam perbualan harian di tempat kerja. Kajian ini menunjukkan budaya komunikasi dan bagaimana memupuk ketua jabatan dan kakitangan yang terlibat dengan tingkah laku komunikasi. Penyelidikan ini menekankan bidang-bidang komunikasi yang kurang berpuas hati dan juga sebab-sebab kurang memuaskan. Cadangan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran komunikasi di

kalangan ketua jabatan dan kakitangan akademik adalah mustahak dan kemahiran komunikasi yang penting bagi pemimpin mesti ditingkatkan untuk tujuan organisasi jangka panjang.



CONTENTS

TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vii
CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xvii
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	xvii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research background	1
1.1.1 Organisational communication	9
1.1.2 Higher educational institutions in Malaysia	12
1.2 Problem statement	14
1.3 Research objective	19
1.4 Research questions	20
1.5 Significance of the study	20
1.6 Limitations of the study	22
1.7 Operational definitions	22
1.7.1 Internal organisational communication	23
1.7.2 Communication quality	23
1.7.3 Heads of departments	23

1.7.4	Communication satisfaction	24
1.7.5	Academic staff	24
1.7.6	Leadership styles	25
1.8	Summary	25
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW		26
2.1	Introduction	26
2.2	Types of internal organizational communication	27
2.3	Communication at universities	28
2.4	The social exchange theory	31
2.4.1	Social exchange theory resources	34
2.5	Internal communication	35
2.5.1	Internal communication dimensions	40
2.6	Communication Satisfaction	44
2.6.1	Dimensions of communication satisfaction	45
2.7	Internal organisational communication and communication satisfaction	53
2.7.1	Dimensions of internal communication and communication satisfaction	55
2.8	Mediator of the internal organisational communication and communication satisfaction, leadership styles	59
2.9	Conceptual framework	62
2.10	Summary	65
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		66
3.1	Introduction	66
3.2	Research design	66
3.3	Sample population	68
3.4	Instruments	69
3.4.1	Tools	70
3.4.2	Operationalization of variables	70
3.4.3	Demographic measures	71
3.4.4	Questionnaire measures	71
3.4.5	Pilot study	76

3.4.6	Validity of instruments	77
3.4.7	Reliability of Instruments	77
3.5	Procedure	79
3.5.1	Data collection	79
3.5.2	Data analysis procedures	80
3.6	Ethical considerations	88
3.7	Summary	88
CHAPTER 4	FINDINGS	89
4.1	Introduction	89
4.2	Data analysis approach	89
4.3	Demographics findings	90
4.3.1	Heads of Departments and academic staff age analysis	90
4.3.2	Gender	91
4.3.3	Current academic staff position at MTUN	92
4.3.4	Current positions duration in MTUN	92
4.3.5	Nature of communication	94
4.3.6	MTUN academic staff and heads of departments qualification	95
4.3.7	Native language	96
4.4	Research findings	96
4.4.1	Current dominant patterns of organizational communication in Malaysian Technical Universities Network (MTUN)	97
4.4.2	Academic staff Malaysian Technical University Network satisfied with existing formal communication process at horizontal and vertical level	106
4.4.3	Internal organisational communication and heads of departments develop effect on Malaysian Technical University Network staff communication	114
4.4.4	Major hindrances or problems	

towards communication satisfaction of Malaysian Technical University Network	119
4.4.5 The existing level of communication between the heads of departments and staff in Malaysian Technical University Network be improved	124
4.5 Overall findings	127
4.6 Summary	134
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS	136
5.1 Discussion	136
5.1.1 Current dominant patterns of organisational communication	136
5.1.2 Communication process at horizontal level and vertical level	137
5.1.3 Supported hypothesis: leadership effects on communication	139
5.2 Contribution of the research	141
5.3 Recommendation for improvement	143
5.3.1 Dominant patterns of communication	143
5.3.2 Vertical and horizontal communication	144
5.3.3 Internal communicational relation	145
5.3.4 Major hindrances	145
5.3.5 Improvement for existing communication	146
5.4 Recommendations for future research	146
5.5 Summary	147
REFERENCES	148
APPENDICES	166
VITA	192

LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Research question and hypothesis	20
2.1	Models based on social exchange theory	32
2.2	Theories based on social exchange theory	32
2.3	Literature review of academic research on internal communication	37
2.4	Communication satisfaction dimension	45
2.5	Literature review of internal organizational communication	56
2.6	Leadership styles and components on which leadership styles affect in the view of different	59
3.1	Demographic questions	71
3.2	Communication patterns	72
3.3	Horizontal and vertical level communication	73
3.4	Internal communication among leadership and staff	74
3.5	Reliability test (pilot study)	76
3.6	Codes for the open-ended responses	85
3.7	Codes for interview data	86
3.8	Codes for the interview data	87
4.1	Demographic details of respondents based on MTUN universities	90
4.2	HOD and staff age analysis	91
4.3	Distribution of gender	91
4.4	Respondents' current position in MTUNs	92
4.5	Current university*Current position	93
4.6	Duration of respondents on current position	93
4.7	Work duration* HOD	94
4.8	Types of communication	94
4.9	Highest educational qualification	95

4.10	Academic qualifications * Current university	95
4.11	Native languages of respondents	96
4.12	Assessment of communication patterns	97
4.13	Communication frequency	100
4.14	Communication content	101
4.15	Communication direction	103
4.16	Communication quality	104
4.17	Corporate communication	106
4.18	Horizontal communication	109
4.19	Supervisor communication	111
4.20	Results for organizational communication satisfaction	114
4.21	Descriptive statistic and inter correlation between internal organizational communication and communication satisfaction	114
4.22	Regression analysis results	115
4.23	Indirect testing effect	116
4.24	Purpose of internal communication	128
5.1	Supported hypotheses	139



LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Classification social resources	34
2.2	Outcomes of socioemotional and economic classification	35
2.3	Internal communication dimensions	41
2.4	Theoretical framework	64
3.1	Visual model for QUAN-qual mixed method design	67
3.2	Standard direct effect	83
3.3	Indirect effect (leadership styles)	83
3.4	Simple model of mediation effects	84
4.1	Direct effect of organisational communication and communication satisfaction	115
4.2	Indirect effect	117

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS	-	Academic staff
CS	-	Communication satisfaction
E	-	Electronic
EIC	-	Effective internal communication
HOD	-	Head of department
IOC	-	Internal organisational communication
MTUN	-	Malaysian Technical University Network
OC	-	Organisational communication
P	-	Printed
SET	-	Social exchange theory
UTHM	-	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
UMP	-	Universiti Malaysia Pahang
UniMAP	-	Universiti Malaysia Perlis
UTeM	-	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka

LIST OF APPENDICES

A	Survey questionnaire	166
B	Reference letter	173
C	Email	174
D	Semi-structured online interview	175
E	Interview coding	180
F	Coded for open-ended questions	186
G	Questionnaire analysis for pilot study	189
H	Inter-rater details	190
I	Statistical analysis	191

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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2. **Aysha Sadia, Berhannudin Mohd Salleh, Zulida Abdul Kadir, Sazuliana Sanif** (2016). *The Relationship between Organizational Communication and Employees Productivity with New Dimensions of Effective Communication is published in Flow Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies* ISSN (Online) 2519-0326 (Print) 2519-089X Volume 2: Issue 2 December 2016
3. **Aysha Sadia, Berhannudin Mohd Salleh, Zulida Abdul Kadir, Sazuliana Sanif** (2018). *Investigating Hindrance to Effective Communication between the Management and Academic Staff of Universities in Malaysia: A Qualitative Case Study is published in International Journal of Education and Psychological Research (IJEPR)* Print - ISSN: 2349 - 0853, e-ISSN: 2279 - 0179 The 1st INTERNATIONAL ASEAN-ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING CONFERENCE (ASEAN-ELT 2018) 15-17 March Melaka Conference proceeding Volume 7, Issue 2 June 2018

4. **Aysha Sadia, Berhannudin Mohd Salleh, Zulida Abdul Kadir, Sazuliana Sanif** Investigating communication satisfaction for continuous development in Malaysian technical universities leadership: Qualitative study among academic staff and head of department. Accepted for publish Scopus indexed Journal: International Journal of Engineering and Technology (UAE) (ISSN: 2227-524X) International Research and Innovation Symposium and Exposition 2018 (RISE2018) 12-13 November UTHM



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

The utmost sole object that we practice in daily life, particularly communication and it is an indispensable element. Even though we recognize it or not, we are communicating with each other every day through numerous ways. People communicate to share with others for building relations at personal and professional level. Communication takes place in the organizations that have an impact on daily routine. While, transmitting ideas information involves sender and receivers. Once they understand each other's message, communication is considered as effective and successful. Therefore, adherence to ineffective communication channels resulting in inappropriate communication at vertical and horizontal levels in the organization. Unsatisfactory communication has become the reason for many problems, creating confusion that causes a failure of productivity. In the organization communication is defined for achieving communal aim that completes with sharing information digitally or directly face to face conversation (Emanoil and Nicoleta, 2013; Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014; Emanoil et al., 2013). Even though organization employees recognise it or might neglect it, generally all the work is based on communication with others through which they learn, understand, and discuss their roles and goals for the specified goals. Thus, organisational communication functions in a reciprocating way, with employees receiving information from their superiors and further they pass on with connected groups at horizontal level (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002).

Communication is becoming a challenge particularly one of the toughest challenges as regards to organizational communication. It flows from top to down in

organizations by the leaders towards employees and supposing sharing among employees about information is not as accordingly as it needs work that may lead to leadership failure as well. However, commonly observed that internal communication happens between supervisors and staff frequently, (Mishra et al., 2014), also at different levels of interpersonal and group (Dolphin, 2005). The purpose of communication within an organization is to synchronize regular work-related actions (Dolphin, 2005), and provide information to employees that could be usable to accomplish their work objectives (Quirke, 2008).

In most organizations' communication is a prime factor, and it would be the most important factor for present complex organisational structure. Effectiveness in communication is a crucial element for the accomplishment of every organisational goal (Welch & Jackson, 2007). For effective communication, it is important that everyone in the organization participates in an uninterrupted communication function that leads towards responsibilities, strategies, and processes that can be synchronised effectively (Dolphin, 2005). Thus, communication in an organization has its positive effect thereby it helps to achieve efficiency. Studies define that communication is necessary for employees at all levels in building up relationships with each other through daily interactions (Argenti, 1998; Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra, 2014). The workplace relationships help to increase employee behaviour towards commitment for the organization as well as it creates the feeling that they are an asset and esteemed part (Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra, 2014; Argenti, 1998).

The place where groups of people come together for the attainment of specific goals is the organization. The existence of an organization depends on people who come under one roof with a purpose, though interaction with one another to accomplish crucial functions that facilitate in attaining specified goals (Daft & Armstrong, 2009). Organisational size does not matter either it comprises only one person, a team of nationals or it may be multinational. Furthermore, it can be in any form like banks, hospitals, universities, and other corporate organizations. The purpose of attaining goals in the organization needs to communicate internally from top to down, bottom to up, horizontally at any certain level. In the same way, internal organisational communication benefits for productivity of all employees that would eventually have an affirmative influence onto the accomplishment of workplace goals in terms of productivity and finance growth. (Mishra et al., 2014; Kalla, 2005). When the employees have assurance that they are acknowledged positively by

superiors, what they share about work may increase their interest and focus towards work. Studies showed that internal communication has an influence on employees' loyalty plus their devotion towards work (Emanoil et al., 2013). More importantly, communication often has a vital impact on an employee's decision of loyalty with organization. According to Toth (2007), internal communication progresses "structures and cultures" (p.480) inside an organization. From Mersham & Skinner (2001) surmise that when effective communication permeates in an organization it signifies a vital work instrument through individuals to recognize their role in the organization as well as assimilates organisational subunits.

An organization might not work effectively when there is a lack of constructive climate and environment in the organization. Constructive environment comes from effective communication where everyone has freedom to speak freely. Therefore, a healthy environment atmosphere helps in improving communication barriers, on the other hand if someone hesitates to share feedback or either some input for projects it cannot lead to effectively. There might be observed lacking leadership skills of communication (Baldoni, 2003). For this purpose, leaders should have to take initiative in helping employees to speak up without hesitation. Flexible internal communication approach ought to be encouraged for open discussion related to essential requirements of employees (Seitel, 2004). Mainly, communication tasks are to keep employees in an organization well informed, not less informed, or not over informed. Thus, capability towards continuous comprehensive communication within an organization is essential. Hence, employees are a key asset for which their proper contribution for organisational success is utmost a necessity.

Correspondingly, effective communication (EC) is crucial in ensuring that employees are knowledgeable and dynamic. The researcher believed that communication must be distributed to an enormous amount of workforce in an appropriate, effective, and active manner. The workforce that remain up to date are suitable and would function well, additionally, they would have a positive effect on the outcome of the organization (Bottazzo, 2005; Poore & Pitt, 2001). Effectiveness takes place when the sender and receiver both recognise the ambiance of the message and concept which they anticipated to transmit. It means that communication practices are connected to employee work satisfaction (Jones, 2006). Additionally, evaluating the efficiency of the organizational communication (OC) structure,

assessments would be able to produce facts based on the strengths and weaknesses of communication channels with organization

Effectiveness in communication is tricky for many companies in the world. A mutual study with the title of “Mind the workplace” by Faas Foundation and Mental Health America (2017), found that 71% of staff looking for new jobs would try to find out about employees’ wellbeing. Furthermore, the study also found out that leaders normally create a major impact towards making their workforce and workplace blissful and devoted, and this method would lead the company for many economic opportunities. According to the mentioned research above, elements of appreciation and compliment can be most rewarding. It also showed that refining the art of propensity would create a valued dedicated workforce rather than only spending on monetary remuneration. The unsuitability of communication forms are frequent indications of widely inserted problems, which would result in ambiguity about the environment within the organization (Koontz, 2001). Then the dimension, medium patterns of communication is possibly measured by applying communicational skills audit in evaluating staff satisfaction through inclusive communication process among superiors and staff in the organization.

Ineffective communication is repeatedly the concern in the breakdown process of any organization. However, the absence of frequent conversation would lead to ambiguity which could result in the disaffection of employees within the organization (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). Communication with staff in universities usually proceeds from top to down through the formal manners. According to Downs and Adrian (2004), briefings about working projects lead to analysing company performance judgments, job instructions, company orientations, and training for the job when in return goals are accomplished. Communications generated via defined process which go towards down in sequence procedure top management to downwards staff (Downs & Adrian 2004). It seems essential to explore the state of internal communication process mainly as it shares the communication satisfaction level which supports organization to continue to work towards success.

Employees experience satisfaction from many ways within an organization through promotions, positive feedback, goal attainment, but all such things related to the communication during interpersonal interactions, group interaction and when interacting with their superiors. While interacting at workplace generally several problems occur due to incompetent skills of communicating that may resulting of

ineffective communication among the staff. In the most instances superiors who lead the organization, constantly keep everything confidential or unshared on the other hand sending too many formal memos, instructions and job duties are also impulsive communication. Thus, the purpose of communication has not taken place effectively and creates a negative impact on individuals in an organization which creates an unhealthy and uncertain environment. Out of order foundations of communication is the supreme glitch which could lead towards creating a confused workplace environment which normally causes failure of many good plans.

Thus, increased productivity at the workplace requires more bounding and sharing. Lack of effective communication has an influence on a wide scale. Mostly, problems occur at interdepartmental level because communication usually functions in a one-way direction of communication at a time. Furthermore, Downs & Adrian (2004), defined a persistent dilemma when information vertically travelling downward thus resulted in the sequence which creates ambiguity about truthfulness, or the appropriateness of information. Maximum chances are, information which are important numbers of time biased, trickle, and reach late. Although, the communication process is extremely complex. As Nel et.al (2005) stated that the communicational procedure greatest hindrance is purifying and misrepresentation of communication. Therefore, the process of communication should be carefully accomplished. As such large-scale communication requires a two-way procedure and mostly emphasizes on using the downward structure would in most cases be ineffective. In an organization such as the army, or applied science physics experiments, the navigation department should have to follow top-down instruction to lead on a task. On the other hand, there are many other organizations they require to be in two ways communication for successful attainment of goals.

The shortfall of communication means emphasized such as unique service tasks and its essentials to keep proceeding addressed, along with other challenges, for the sake of a positive run through the atmosphere of an organization. Therefore, Tavakoli (2015) had stated that communication requires effective functions equally at vertical and horizontal level in an organization. Absence of communication remains evident, affecting managerial substances, the performance appraisal method, interpersonal relationship, and managerial communication challenges. (Zuma 2007). Researchers abstracted their study within an organization established on the base of transmitting the message, which later transformed and emphasised on the receiver.

From 1950 - 1970 most researchers Winska (2010) found that researchers focused on top down or downward hierarchical communication.

Thus, one of the greatest challenges in organizations like universities is the eagerness of communication in a formal, informal way because unstandardized communication channels have a challenging impact. For the formal and informal ways of communication and recognition academic leaders' involvement is integral, as the leaders are a core collective category in the entire higher educational system in Malaysia (Ghasemy et al, 2018). Advancement related to objective, strategy matters, and consultation merely existed as suggested by the academic leaders in Public Higher Educational Institutes (HEI) in Malaysia. It is because university leadership can effectively be addressed by them (Ghasemy et al, 2018). Leadership and managerial competencies issues were also being addressed in Australia as stated by New-eland Scott, Coates, & Anderson, (2008) Scott & McKellar, (2012).

Moreover, a smaller amount of communication among supervisors and staff, makes it more complicated. Another service organization example from the health department highlighted the issue of a destructive exercise is obviously noticeable from an integrity evaluation completed by the Ethics Institute of South Africa in 2001. In a single largest health centre at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in the City of Johannesburg, (Landman, Mouton and Nevhutalu, 2001). The audit comprised that communication is one of its foremost principled stakes. Consequences, commencing about the survey emphasised the necessity for this study. Thus, Landman et al (2001) stated that more than half of the staff specified that insufficient clearness at the hospital's proven via rumours through grapevine have been a cause of misinformation. Half of the staff approximately confirmed that they are not considered to express what they assumed or thought. Nearly half of them had spoken that their complaints had not been taken seriously, whereas three quarters said they were not even acknowledged or got any acknowledgement from their managers. Furthermore, fifty-four percent did not have faith in the system which existed for recording cases of delinquency. Therefore, the staff collective source for information is the rumour within the health organization, and that is an additional sign that current networks and techniques designed for communication remained considered insufficient. This health service organization study shows that staff are experiencing dissatisfaction with several communication factors such as absence of a two-way communication. Organizations like hospitals, universities main product is

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